

~~TOP SECRET~~

XI. Surveillance of Soviet Naval and Merchant Ships

⁴~~(S)~~ Cuban Crisis Merchant Ship Traffic. Surveillance, photographic coverage, and reporting on merchant ships engaged in the Soviet military build-up and retreat in Cuba provided a unique test of NAVEUR intelligence in a near-war situation. All Soviet merchant ships designated for mandatory photographic coverage because of their suspected role as missile or Beagle bomber carriers, and many others, were photographed successfully.

Aircraft photographed the ships transiting the Mediterranean. Ships going by way of the North Sea and the Baltic were photographed with CINCUSNAVEUR providing intelligence support. Liaison with insured the timely receipt of information available there. Units of the Sixth Fleet reported the heavy volume of Soviet shipping transiting the Mediterranean, submitting 371 merchant ship reports during the year (43% more than in 1961 and the highest annual number to date).

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